



# University of Connecticut Health Center

## COMMERCE COMMITTEE TESTIMONY FEBRUARY 28, 2013

**Marc Lalande, Professor of Genetics and Developmental Biology, UCHC and Director, UConn Stem Cell Institute and Institute for Systems Genomics**

### **S.B. No. 838 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A FUND FOR BIOSCIENCE INNOVATION**

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to voice the University of Connecticut's enthusiastic support of SB No. 838, An Act Establishing a Fund for Bioscience Innovation.

With the strong backing of the people of Connecticut, its General Assembly and Governor, your University has embarked on the mission of "Jobs Today, Economic Growth Tomorrow, Innovation for the Future". These are goals of Bioscience Connecticut, a program that will renovate existing UConn Health Center facilities to increase bioscience research capacity and productivity, augment the number of basic and clinical/translational scientists, increase medical and dental school enrollments by 30 percent and expand incubator facilities to foster new business startups.

Bioscience Connecticut is one of three major state investments that will foster innovation, facilitate collaboration, support bench to marketplace commercialization and develop a highly skilled workforce. The UConn Technology Park, that will ultimately incorporate 900,000 sq ft of research innovation space, will draw innovative companies and researchers from around the globe to Storrs. And now, with the Governor's proposal *Next Generation Connecticut*, the University will be able to greatly expand, over the next decade, the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) disciplines at UConn and meet industry workforce needs in these areas. It is with gratitude and excitement that the University of Connecticut will move forward to climbing to the top of internationally rankings of research universities.

The Fund for Bioscience Innovation is a critical component of UConn's future success in the international arena. By funding cutting-edge tools and platforms, supporting commercialization and requiring strong research partnerships, UConn, Jackson Labs, Yale and others, every dollar invested will create jobs in the bioscience industry. The Fund for Bioscience Innovation represents a refinement and improvement of the successful approach in building a stem cell research program in our State. This collaborative effort between UConn, Wesleyan and Yale has proven to be successful in terms of job creation, through leveraged funding from the federal government and private foundations and by the launching of three UConn stem cell start-up companies through its Technology Incubation Program (TIP).

UConn's TIP will serve as the interface between the research supported by The Fund for Bioscience Innovation and its ultimate commercialization by providing labs, offices, and other unique resources for start-up companies. Statewide, there is a pipeline of ten companies seeking TIP space. These start-ups and future needs generated by the new Bioscience Fund will be met by construction of the new 28,000 sq ft Bioscience Connecticut TIP facility in Farmington. The latest addition to the UCHC's TIP is IMStem, a start-up that is supported through foreign venture capital and with the aim of realizing the clinical and translational potential of stem cell research to benefit patients with autoimmune disease. The research that gave rise to IMStem's intellectual property was funded by the State Cell Fund so we can expect that, in a similar fashion, the Fund for Bioscience Innovation will spawn start-ups in areas such as personalized medicine, therapeutics and genomics. We can predict success for new Fund because, in contrast to stem cell research, which essentially did not exist here prior to the launching of the State's funding program, there already exists a critical mass in the field of genomics. Jackson Labs and Yale are world-renowned leaders in genomics. UConn has recently joined their ranks with a \$9.2M genomics grant award from the National Institutes of Health to Professor Brenton Graveley at the UConn Health Center.

Thank you for your attention, for your support of the University of Connecticut and its academic medical center and for your vision in supporting Bioscience innovation and commercialization. We urge your support of SB 380.